

DIRECTOR SHIRE SERVICES REPORT

8th March 2005

DSS8	SECOND BRIDGE CROSSING - KEMPSEY
FILE: B6-62	APV

SUMMARY:

Reporting on the current status of the project for the Second Bridge Crossing of the Macleay River Kempsey.



Council, at its meeting on 13th April 2004, resolved:

"That a decision on the Second Bridge Crossing Project be deferred until the results of the Stage 1 investigations by Cardno MBK are received."

The report to Council's Meeting on 13th April 2004 details the background of the project and the progress up until April 2004. A copy of that report is attached [\[Appendix F\]](#).

Council has now received a draft copy of the report from Cardno MBK presenting the results of the Stage 1 investigations, namely the Concept Design, the Urban Design and the Review of Environmental Factors. A copy of the Executive Summary is attached [\[Appendix G\]](#).

The report is still only a draft report as it is considered that some aspects of the investigations have not been fully assessed and/or reported and the consultant has been requested to address these concerns. Nevertheless, the draft report does provide sufficient information for an informed decision to be made regarding the project.

The draft report estimates that the indicative construction cost of the project would be \$8.07M without contingencies and would have a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of 4.2. Although this arrives at a lower BCR than previously (7.5), it still indicates an attractive project in regards to road user economic benefit as well as broader social benefits to the wider community. Once completed, the Report will be forwarded to the RTA for their consideration.

As advised previously, a further amount of \$196,000 is still required for Cardno MBK to undertake the Detailed Design and the Construction Tender Documentation for the project. No funding for

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this second stage of the investigations has been provided. The RTA has indicated that they will await the outcomes of the first stage of investigations before deciding whether to proceed with the project. During discussions, the RTA has indicated that they would expect a contribution of at least 50% by Council for the second stage of the investigations.

No commitment has yet been made by the RTA on whether funding will be provided for the actual construction. If the project were to proceed, Council would need to negotiate with the RTA regarding its contribution to the project. Informal discussions with the RTA have indicated that they could be seeking a contribution from Council as high as 50 percent of the total project cost. Because of the high cost of the project, the amount of Council's contribution should be negotiated with the RTA prior to deciding whether to proceed with the project.

As previously advised, the major benefit of the Second Bridge Crossing is in the short term, prior to the construction of the Pacific Highway Upgrade around Kempsey. Progress on the Second Bridge Crossing has been longer than anticipated with still no firm commitment for funding for stage 2 of the investigations or the actual construction. The second bridge proposal offers no benefit to Frederickton and does not remove heavy vehicles from Central and South Kempsey.

At the Value Management Study for the Pacific Highway Upgrade and in informal discussions, the RTA has indicated that the construction of the Second Bridge Crossing may allow deferral of the Kempsey Bypass. There is concern within the community generally, and in particular by the residents of Kempsey and Frederickton, regarding the noise and safety of large numbers of heavy vehicles on the highway traveling through the urban areas. The four major accidents last year involving the overturning of heavy vehicles only emphasized those concerns.

Council is aware of the commitment by the Federal Government to increase funding for the upgrading of the Pacific Highway under the AusLink Program. This increase in funding allows the RTA to bring forward the timing for the construction of the Kempsey Bypass. By bringing forward the Concept Design and Environmental Assessment Impact for the Kempsey Bypass (currently underway), the RTA has shown that the Kempsey Bypass project has a high priority.

The increase in funding for the Pacific Highway Upgrading and the early commencement of the Stage 2 investigations for the Kempsey Bypass coupled with the delays with the Second Bridge Crossing could result in both these projects being constructed at about the same time. If this were the case, many of the benefits of the Second Bridge Crossing would NOT be realised.

If the project proceeds, Council's contribution (based on 50% contribution) may be as high as:

2005/06	\$100,000	Detailed Design
2006/07	\$2,000,000	Construction
2006/07	\$2,000,000	Construction

Ongoing costs would be required to maintain the structure and to remove debris and/or undertake repairs following moderate and major river rises. In addition, Council would need to provide for the eventual replacement of the bridge structure.

It is recommended that this project not proceed.

A commitment should be sought from the Minister for Roads regarding the timely commencement of the Kempsey Bypass. It is considered that the Kempsey Bypass will better address the concerns of the community. Any available RTA funding should be directed to bring forward that project, and to ensure that that project provides the best possible outcomes for the community.

The current pedestrian walkway from South Kempsey is attached to the Railway Bridge. This walkway is the responsibility of the RTA. Several years ago inadequacies of the walkway were raised with the RTA. Any decision regarding the upgrading/replacement of the walkway was deferred pending the outcome of the Second Bridge Crossing project. If Council is of a mind not to proceed with the Second Bridge Crossing, then the RTA should again be approached to urgently replace the walkway.

- ***Environmental Implications***

There are no environmental implications.

- ***Social Implications***

The Social benefits of the Second Bridge Project are well known and clearly set out in the previous reports. These proposed benefits will be lost should the recommendation be adopted.

- ***Economic Implications***

The economic implications are set out in the report. By adopting the Recommendations Council can improve its financial position.

- ***Policy or Statutory Implications***

There are no policy or statutory implications.

- ***Director's Review***

The benefits from this project are substantial but are highly dependent on the timing of the Highway Upgrade project. Should the Bypass be confirmed and commence in the short term, the opportunity to draw substantial funds from the RTA will be lost.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) That the Minister for Roads be approached to ensure the prompt commencement of construction of the Kempsey Highway Bypass and seeking a firm commitment to commencement.
- 2) That the Second Bridge Crossing Project not proceed.
- 3) That the replacement of the footway / cycle way adjacent to the Kempsey Railway Bridge be pursued with the RTA as a matter of urgency.

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DIRECTOR SHIRE SERVICES